

# EEG Signal Analysis via a Cleaning Procedure based on Multivariate Empirical Mode Decomposition

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**Abstract:** Artifacts are present in most of the electroencephalography (EEG) recordings, making it difficult to interpret or analyze the data. In this paper a cleaning procedure based on a multivariate extension of empirical mode decomposition is used to improve the quality of the data. This is achieved by applying the cleaning method to raw EEG data. Then, a synchrony measure is applied on the raw and the clean data in order to compare the improvement of the classification rate. Two classifiers are used, linear discriminant analysis and neural networks. For both cases, the classification rate is improved about 20%.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Electroencephalogram (EEG) signals recorded from the scalp, commonly present different interference signals due to muscle artifacts, such as eye blinks or eye movement. Electric potentials due to these artifacts can be orders of magnitude larger than the EEG and can propagate across the scalp, masking and distorting brain signals (Croft and Barry, 2000).

This paper focuses on improving the quality of the data, removing artifacts from EEG data using a new signal processing technique, Multivariate Empirical Mode Decomposition (mEMD). This technique is an extension of the Empirical Mode Decomposition (EMD), and provides a decomposition of the original EEG data into several oscillatory modes computed along multichannel data (Rehman and Mandic, 2010). Then the efficiency of the proposed method of cleaning artifacts is evaluated on real EEG data from an Alzheimer Disease (AD) data base. The evaluation of this cleaning procedure is calculated in terms of classification rate. Obtained results with clean data are much better than those obtained with raw data, hence the detection of AD is simplified.

Recently it was shown that EMD is a good method to separate eye movements from neurophysiological signals as pointed out in

(Rutkowski et al., 2009a, Rutkowski et al., 2009b, Molla et al., 2012), where results were obtained comparing the extracted modes with the modes of the EOG.

A previous study using mEMD (Gallego-Jutglà et al., 2011) presented promising results using this decomposition on simulated EEG data, where the cleaned data presented always a correlation higher than 0.8 with the simulated data without artifacts.

Another study had used mEMD for Seizure detection in EEG signals (Rehman et al., 2010c). In this study, Hilbert Huang transform and mEMD are combined to extract spectral features from multichannel EEG signals. The spectral feature used is the mean frequency of the signals derived from the Hilbert-Huang spectrum, and the method have shown to be helpful for epileptic seizure detection. At the end of this article, it is also suggested that some artifacts can be removed by subtracting the unwanted signals from the decomposition.

This paper is organized as follows. First, methods used, including EMD and mEMD description, the cleaning method, the synchrony measure used and the classifiers used are presented in Section 2. Section 3 describes the experimental results obtained. Finally, discussion and conclusions are depicted in Section 4 and Section 5 respectively.

## 2 METHODS

To eliminate EEG artifacts, the use of mEMD is proposed. mEMD is a new technique to decompose EEG data based on EMD. mEMD decomposition is applied in an Alzheimer disease data base and then data is cleaned using the cleaning procedure presented in (Gallego-Jutglà et al., 2011). It is important to note that now we deal with any kind of artefacts and not only eyeblinks, therefore we generalise the method to be more useful. In order to evaluate the improvement of the cleaning procedure, we don't have a reference cleaned signals to compare with, phase synchrony is computed and then a classifier is set up in order to discriminate between Alzheimer disease subjects and control subjects. Two types of classifiers, Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA) and Neural Network (NN), are explored in order to see the effect of the cleaning method.

EEG dataset is composed of 15 healthy Ctrl subjects and 15 patients with mild AD. The EEG time series were recorded using 21 electrodes at a sampling frequency of 128 Hz.

### 2.1 Empirical Mode Decomposition

EMD algorithm is a method designed for multiscale decomposition and time –frequency analysis, which can analyze nonlinear and non-stationary data (Huang et al., 1998).

With this method, any time-series data set can be decomposed into a finite and often small number of oscillatory modes. These oscillatory modes are called Intrinsic Mode Functions (IMFs). IMFs are defined so as to exhibit locality in time and to represent a single oscillatory mode. Each IMF satisfies two basic conditions: (i) the number of zero-crossings and the number of extrema must be the same or differ at most by one in the whole dataset, and (ii) at any point, the mean value of the envelope defined by the local maxima and the envelope defined by the local minima is zero (Huang et al., 1998).

The EMD algorithm (Huang et al., 1998) for the signal  $x(t)$  can be summarized as follows.

- (i) Determine the local maxima and minima of  $x(t)$ ;
- (ii) Generate an upper and a lower signal envelope by connecting the local maxima and minima computed previously respectively by an interpolation method;
- (iii) Compute the local mean  $m_1(t)$ , by averaging the upper and lower signal envelopes;

(iv) Subtract the local mean from the data:  
 $h_1(t) = x(t) - m_1(t)$ ;

(v) If  $h_1(t)$  obeys the stopping criterion, then define  $d(t) = h_1(t)$  as an IMF, otherwise set  $x(t) = h_1(t)$  and repeat the process from step i.

Then, the empirical mode decomposition of a signal  $x(t)$  can be written as:

$$x(t) = \sum_{k=1}^n \text{IMF}_k(t) + \varepsilon_n(t) \quad (1)$$

Where  $n$  is the number of extracted IMFs, and the final residue  $\varepsilon_n(t)$  is the mean trend or a constant.

### 2.2 Multivariate Empirical Mode Decomposition (mEMD) Applied to EEG Signals

Multivariate Empirical Mode Decomposition, is an extension for multivariate signals of EMD.

Even though EMD has achieved optimal results in data processing (Diez et al. 2009, Molla et al., 2010), several shortcomings are presented when this technique is used in multichannel data sets such as EEG. The IMFs from different time series do not necessarily correspond to the same frequency, and different time series may end up having a different number of IMFs. These shortcomings complicate the use of this technique to work with multichannels data sets, because it is difficult to match the different obtained IMFs from different channels (Mutlu and Aviyente, 2011).

To solve the presented shortcomings of working with multichannels data sets, several extensions of EMD have been proposed. This extensions are Bivariate Empirical Mode Decomposition (Molla et al. 2010), to decompose two time series at the same time, and Trivariate Empirical Mode Decomposition (Rehman and Mandic, 2010a), to decompose three time series at the same time. Recently, for multichannel data sets, such as EEG, an extension of EMD to mEMD was proposed (Rehman and Mandic, 2010b).

In mEMD the local mean is computed by tanking an average of upper and lower envelopes obtained from all the sensors. The upper and lower envelopes, in turn are obtained by interpolating between the local maxima and minima. However, in general, for multivariate signals, the local maxima and minima may not be defined directly. To deal with these problems multiple  $n$ -dimensional envelopes are generated by taking signal projections along different direction in  $n$ -dimensional spaces

(Rehman and Mandic, 2010b). mEMD is the technique used in this paper to compute all the decompositions.

The algorithm (Rehman and Mandic, 2010b) can be summarized as follows:

(i) Choose a suitable pointset for sampling on an  $(n - 1)$  sphere (this  $(n - 1)$  sphere resides in an  $n$  dimensional Euclidean coordinate system).

(ii) Calculate the projection,  $p^{\theta_k}(t)\}_{t=1}^T$ , of the input signal  $v(t)_{t=1}^T$  along the direction vector,  $x^{\theta_k}$  for all  $k$  giving  $p^{\theta_k}(t)\}_{t=1}^K$ .

(iii) Find the time instants  $t_i^{\theta_k}$  corresponding to the maxima of the set of projected signals  $p^{\theta_k}(t)\}_{t=1}^T$ .

(iv) Interpolate  $\left[t_i^{\theta_k}, v(t_i^{\theta_k})\right]$  to obtain multivariate envelope curves  $e^{\theta_k}(t)\}_{t=1}^K$ .

(v) For a set of  $K$  direction vectors, the mean of the envelope curves is calculated as  $m(t) = (1/K) \sum_{k=1}^K e^{\theta_k}(t)$ .

(vi) Extract the detail  $d(t)$  using  $d(t) = x(t) - m(t)$ . If the detail  $d(t)$  fulfills the stopping criterion for a multivariate IMF, apply the above procedure to  $x(t) - m(t)$ , otherwise apply it to  $d(t)$ .

Then, the mEMD of a signal  $x(t)$  can be written as detailed in equation 1

The used stopping criterion is defined in (Rilling et al., 2003).

### 2.3 Cleaning Pprocedure

The used cleaning procedure was previously presented in (Gallego-Jutglà et al., 2011). In this article the proposed procedure was applied to simulated EEG data with eyeblink artefacts. Now, the extension to any kind of artefacts and the performance on real EEG data is evaluated.

The cleaning procedure is based on mEMD and seeks the common modes which are present in all the electrodes. Here the key idea is that if a mode is present in all the electrodes, it is probably due to artifacts and not to EEG signals, so this mode is suppressed in the reconstruction process.

The cleaning procedure can be summarized as follows:

(i) Apply mEMD to raw EEG data of  $N$  electrodes, in order to obtain  $M$  oscillatory modes of the multivariate data.

(ii) Construct a matrix containing the same mode for all the channels. Therefore a total of  $M$  matrices are obtained.

(iii) Calculate the Correlation Matrix ( $CM$ ) of each one of these previous matrices, obtaining  $CM \in \mathbb{R}^{N \cdot N \cdot M}$

(iv) Compute the Communality Index  $CI \in \mathbb{R}^M$ , containing the mean correlation of each mode for all the sensors. The  $CI$  is computed using the following expression:

$$CI = \frac{1}{N^2} \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=1}^N |CM| \quad (2)$$

(v) Normalize  $CI$  between 0 and 1.

(vi) Threshold  $CI$  in order to find which of these modes are common within all the channels. Modes with high correlation ( $|r| > 0.8$ ) are eliminated

(vii) Reconstruct clean signals without taking into account the eliminated modes

The proposed cleaning procedure was applied independently to all the subjects contained in the data base.

### 2.4 Measure

In order to evaluate the efficiency of the proposed cleaning method, each one of the subjects was characterized with a measure.

Different studies have shown that Alzheimer disease cause a change in EEG synchrony, so to characterize the presents subjects in the data base, the phase synchrony measure was used.

Phase synchrony measure the phase dependence between two time series  $x$  and  $y$ , computing the dependence between their instantaneous phases  $\phi_x$  and  $\phi_y$ . Even though the amplitudes of  $x$  and  $y$  are independent, their instantaneous phases may be synchronized. The instantaneous phase  $\phi_x$  of a time serie  $x$  may be extracted as:

$$\phi_x(k) = \arg[x(k) + i\tilde{x}(k)] \quad (3)$$

where  $\tilde{x}$  is the Hilbert transform of  $x$ . The phase synchrony index  $\gamma$  for two instantaneous phases  $\phi_x$  and  $\phi_y$  is defined as:

$$\gamma = |e^{i(n\phi_n - m\phi_y)}| \in [0,1] \quad (4)$$

where  $n$  and  $m$  are integers (usually  $n=1=m$ ).

The phase synchrony value that characterized each subject was computed as presented in (Dauwels et al., 2009). For each subject, the synchrony between all the possible pairs of electrodes was computed. Then, 5 regions of the head were defined (frontal, right temporal, left temporal, central and occipital areas). To evaluate local synchrony, the average of the synchrony values obtained between the electrodes of each region was computed. Then,

to compute the global synchrony, an average of the computed local synchrony was done.

Phase synchrony was computed in different frequency bands, according to the classical used division on  $\delta$  (2 to 4 Hz.),  $\theta$  (4 to 8 Hz.),  $\alpha_1$  (8 to 10 Hz.),  $\alpha_2$  (10 to 12 Hz.) and  $\beta$  (12 to 25 Hz.) bands. Signals were band-pass filtered between the selected frequencies ranges. 3rd order Butterworth filters were used, as they can be implemented easily and offer good transition band characteristics at low coefficient orders.

## 2.5 Classification

Two different types of classifiers were used to classify the synchrony measures obtained with the raw and the clean EEG data. Synchrony measures obtained in the 5 frequency bands were used as input features of the classifier.

### 2.5.1 Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA)

Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA) is a well-known scheme for feature extraction and dimension reduction. It has been used widely in many applications involving high-dimensional data, such as face recognition and image retrieval. Classical LDA projects the data onto a lower-dimensional vector space such that the ratio of the between-class distances to the within-class distance is maximized, thus achieving maximum discrimination. The optimal projection (transformation) can be readily computed by applying the eigendecomposition on the scatter matrices. See (Duda et al., 2000, Fukunaga, 1990) for details on the algorithm.

LDA was used to classify the computed synchrony measures obtained from the EEG data of Alz and Ctr subjects. As the number of subjects in the data base is small, Leave-One-Out (LOO) procedure was used. In this LOO crossvalidation scheme of  $N$  observations,  $N-1$  are used for training and the last is used for evaluation. This process is repeated  $N$  times, leaving one different observation for evaluation each time. The mean success classification value in percentage (%) is obtained as a final result.

### 2.5.2 Neural Network

In recent years several classification systems have been implemented using different techniques, such as Neural Networks.

The widely used Neural Networks techniques are very well known in pattern recognition applications.

An artificial neural network (ANN) is a mathematical model that tries to simulate the structure and/or functional aspects of biological neural networks. It consists of an interconnected group of artificial neurons and processes information using a connectionist approach to computation. In most cases an ANN is an adaptive system that changes its structure based on external or internal information that flows through the network during the learning phase.

Neural networks are non-linear statistical data modelling tools. They can be used to model complex relationships between inputs and outputs or to find patterns in data.

One of the simplest ANN is the so called perceptron that consist of a simple layer that establishes its correspondence with a rule of discrimination between classes based on the linear discriminator. However, it is possible to define discriminations for non-linearly separable classes using multilayer perceptrons (MLP).

The Multilayer Perceptron (Multilayer Perceptron, MLP), also known as Backpropagation Net (BPN), is one of the best known and used artificial neural network model as pattern classifiers and functions approximators (Lippman, 1987), (Freeman and Skapura, 1991). It belongs to the so-called feedforward networks class, and its topology is composed by different fully interconnected layers of neurons, where the information always flows from the input layer, whose only role is to send input data to the rest of the network, toward the output layer, crossing all the existing layers (called hidden layers) between the input and output. Essentially the inner layers are responsible for carrying out information processing, extracting features of the input data.

Although there are many variants, usually each neuron in one layer has directed connections to the neurons of the subsequent layer but there is no connection or interaction between neurons on the same layer (Bishop, 1995, Hush and Horne, 1993).

In this work we have used a multilayer perceptron with one hidden layer of 30 (empirically obtained value) different neurons (nodes). Each neuron is associated with weights and biases. These weights and biases are set to each connections of the network and are obtained from training in order to make their values suitable for the classification task between the different classes.

The number of input neurons is equal to the number of frequency bands considered, and the number of output neurons is just one as we needs to



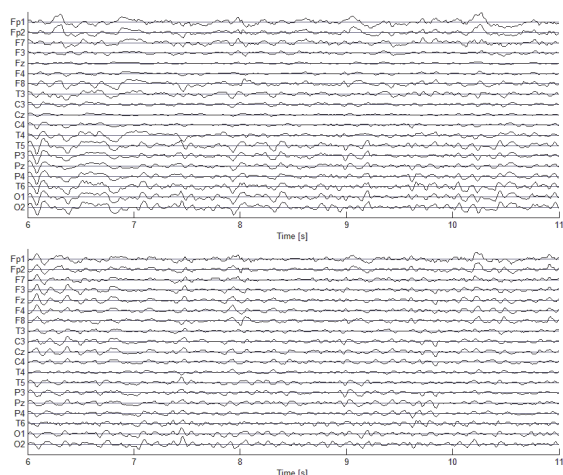


Figure 1: Comparison of the cleaning procedure. The top image presents a 5-sec portion of raw EEG time series for an Alzheimer subject. The bottom image presents the same 5-sec of data after applying the cleaning procedure.

discriminate between only two classes (binary problem).

For the neural network classifier, again the LOO crossvalidation was used. To compute the classification rate the LOO was computed 3 times, the final classification was the mean of these 3 different values.

### 3 RESULTS

The proposed cleaning method was applied to all the subjects contained in the data base. Then the phase synchrony was computed for raw and clean data and the classification of each type of data was computed.

The improvement of the quality of the data after applying the cleaning procedure can be seen in Figure 1, where some of the visible artifacts are not present in the image of the clean data (bottom image). The eliminated IMFs during the cleaning process for this subject are presented in Figure 2, where 11 IMFs were obtained. The used threshold ( $|r| > 0.8$ ) is presented with a dotted line.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the presented  $CI$  has several values higher than the threshold. The IMF that hold the lower frequencies of the decomposition (IMF7, IMF8, IMF9, IMF10, IMF11) and the residue  $\varepsilon_n(t)$ , are the ones that are eliminated for this subject during the reconstruction process. IMF 5 was also eliminated by the cleaning process. For all the subjects the eliminated modes were those that hold the low frequency oscillation.

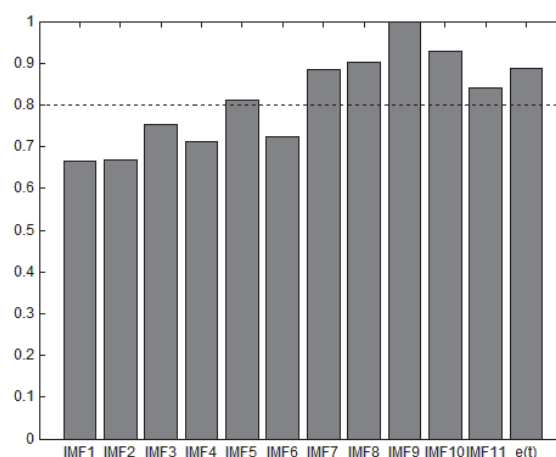


Figure 2: Obtained Communality Index for an Alzheimer diseases patient. 11 IMF were obtained during the decomposition. Eliminated modes during the cleaning procedure are the ones that present  $|r| > 0.8$ . The threshold  $|r| > 0.8$  is presented with a dotted line.

Obtained Classification Rates (CR) of synchrony measures after classifying each type of data with the two classifiers, LDA and NN, are presented in Figure 3. With LDA, 56.67% of CR was obtained with raw data and 76.67% was obtained with clean data. On the other hand, the results obtained with NN presented a CR of 58.89% for raw data and 80% with clean data.

The presented results improve the classification rate for both classifiers. For LDA an improvement of 20% was obtained and for NN an improvement of 21.11%.

### 4 DISCUSSION

The cleaning method presented an improvement of the quality of the data. The classification results obtained for both types of classifiers presented better results for the clean data, than the classification rate obtained with the raw data.

The eliminated modes presented in Figure 2 and the modes eliminated from all the subjects, correspond to low frequency oscillation. These results are consistent with previous knowledge of artifacts, in which the artifact interference is found to be in the low frequencies.

These results point out that the criterion used to select the modes to be discarded, based on the Communality Index ( $CI$ ), is reliable and can be used for any kind of artifacts.

Also, results emphasizes that the use of mEMD to correct artifacts may be a good procedure for EEG

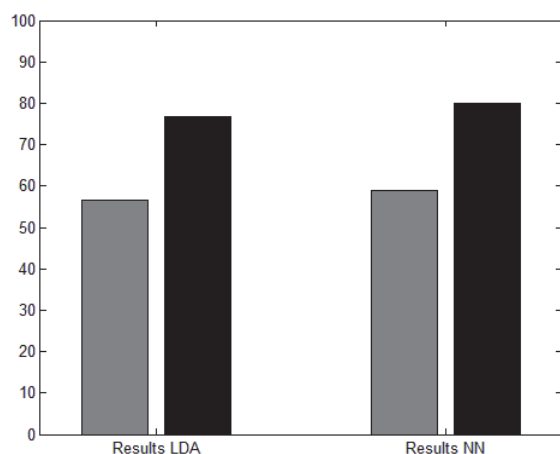


Figure 3: Classification Rates obtained after classifying the synchrony values with LDA and NN. In both classifiers, grey bars correspond to results obtained with raw EEG data, black bars correspond to results obtained with clean EEG data.

signal preprocessing, a necessary step to be taken before any kind of EEG signal analysis.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper a procedure for removing artifacts from EEG data is tested in real data. This method is based on an EEG decomposing technique, which allows flexible signal decomposition of the original time series in different oscillatory modes. The so-obtained components from each EEG channel have been analyzed and those that were present in all the electrodes have been removed from the reconstructed signal. Then phase synchrony has been computed for all the subjects, and the obtained values have been classified using two different classifiers, linear discriminant analysis and neural network.

Future work will include the comparison of this method with ICA-based cleaning procedures (Solé-Casals et al., 2010), or Wavelet-based cleaning procedures (Krishnaveni et al., 2006, Vialatte et al., 2008).

Of course, it is important to point out that the data set at hand is fairly small. A larger sample size and a more diverse data set will be used in order to generalize the results of this study.

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